[peel_logo](http://www.peelschools.org/index.htm)

# Context

Teachers will obtain assessment information through a variety of means, which may include formal and informal observations, **discussions, learning conversations**, questioning, conferences, homework, tasks done in groups, demonstrations, projects, portfolios, developmental continua, performances, peer and self-assessments, self-reflections, essays, and tests.

Evidence of student achievement for evaluation (i.e. assessment of learning) is collected over time from three different sources –*observations*, ***conversations***, and *student products*. Using multiple sources of evidence increases the reliability and validity of the evaluation of student learning. “Student products” may be in the form of tests or exams and/or assignments for evaluation. Assignments for evaluation may include rich performance tasks, demonstrations, projects, and/or essays.

# Policy

February 2012

Assessment plays a critical role in teaching and learning and should have as its goal the development of students as independent and autonomous learners. The use of assessment for the purpose of improving learning and helping students become independent learners requires a culture in which student and teacher learn together in a collaborative relationship, each playing an active role in setting learning goals, developing success criteria, giving and receiving feedback, monitoring progress, and adjusting learning strategies. The teacher acts as a “lead learner”, providing support while gradually releasing more and more responsibility to the student, as the student develops the knowledge and skills needed to become an independent learner.

*“The first thing a teacher needs to learn to do, no matter what a kid says when you ask a question is to ask them further questions like, Why do you think that? Tell me how you got that?, Say more about that. Any phrase that will get the kid to tell you more about what they are thinking, whether the answer is right or wrong, because we have to help the teachers to get away from the ‘right answer’ nonsense too. It’s not about right answers, it’s about developing reasoning and the capacity to articulate and communicate...*-Dr. Lucy West

CISESS, Peel District School Board

Peel’s *Growing Success* Monograph Series:

Evidence of Learning: Conversations, Grades 1-12

**What is conversational evidence?**

Evidence of learning refers to anything that **students do**, **say** or **create** that demonstrates understanding of Ontario curriculum expectations. Evidence of learning also refers to a more holistic approach or process of appraising what students know, can do and understand in place traditional assessment methods of teaching, quizzing and testing. It uses the process of **triangulation** of student data used in research to provide a more well-rounded and all-inclusive picture of student achievement. Triangulation means collecting student evidence over time from three sources: observations, **conversations** and student products and considering all three sources in determining students’ grades. What matters is the quality of the evidence gathered.

Using **conversations** is a powerful way of deepening our understanding about the quality of student learning. Teachers can use this evidence to inform their professional judgement, along with other forms of evidence, when determining students’ grades. The key is to be clear with students about what you’re looking for and to find an efficient way to track/record your observations. In purposeful observation, teachers assume the role of professional witness to learning and use this information to more fully understand the learning process and as a third point of reflection about teaching practice.

**How Does Conversational Evidence Align to *Growing Success* Policy?**

**(Assessment Framework: Processes and Strategies in a Collaborative Relationship for Teachers, Peers, and Individual Learners)**

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**How Might I Think About Different Types of Learning Conversations?**

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| **Purpose** | **Audience** | **Context** |
| * *For learning* * *As Learning* * *Of Learning* | * Student with Peers * Student with the Teacher * Student with Member of School Community | * Informal or Formal? * Teacher or student directed/ facilitated? (or both)? * Discussion (purpose: to come consensus or a decision)? * Dialogue (purpose: to come to a common understanding)? |

**How Might I Go About Gathering Conversational Evidence in My Classroom?**



Gathering Evidence from

Conversation

**What Are ‘Grand Conversations’ and How Can They Reveal Evidence of Learning? (Excerpted from LNS-CBS series monographs-Grand Conversations in Primary and Junior Classrooms-Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat)**

**‘Grand conversations’ are classroom conversations that:**

* Help students understand how language works
* Build students’ basic literacy and critical literacy skills
* Build students’ comprehension skills
* Improve student understanding of a text or problem
* Build students’ capacity to analyze rich texts
* Explore different/multiple perspectives
* Negotiate and make meaning
* Critically question authors (and authorship)
* Build higher levels of literacy
* Foster critical and creative thinking

**Dialogic Stance and Assessing Grand Conversations**

*Providing students with multiple opportunities to engage in age-appropriate conversations that approximates the conversations that adults engage in when they are trying to inquire into or understand something, weigh options and solutions and make decisions, solve a or think through a problem or to produce a design that meets important criteria. These conversations are prompted by but not dominated or controlled by the teacher. This stance complements and supports student inquiry.*

Frequent and varied assessment helps students understand how well they are doing with respect to personal and group learning goals. Self-reflection, peer assessment and descriptive feedback are invaluable tools to ensure that progress continues. **Using assessment information from multiple appropriate sources contributes to an accurate and robust picture of achievement, providing teachers and students with a clear sense of what they have accomplished and what the current focus for improvement should be.** Students’ ability to listen, comprehend oral text, critically respond, build on the thinking of others, make their conceptual content knowledge visible and entertain and present various points of view can be assessed. They can be assessed on their understanding of content areas and different oral text forms. Assessment can also focus on students’ presentation skills. To establish where student strengths lie and what next steps might be, teachers can use a wide variety of assessment methods. Some are suggested below:

**• Observation** coupled with a specific checklist is particularly useful when teachers are moving from group to group and focusing on specific behaviours.

**• Filming student interaction** allows teachers and students to revisit specific interactions in order to clarify what worked well, what could be improved and next steps for the conversation.

**• Requiring students to hand in their preparation notes** enables teachers to review the points students were prepared to speak to in response to the task, the evidence they collected and their anticipation of questions and possible rebuttals.

**• Students’ summaries** of the discussion can help teachers track the group’s thinking. This might entail assigning two or more students to make notes about the conversation as it happens. The group would then verify the summary and sign off on the assignment.

**• Regularly scheduled teacher-student conferences** provide an opportunity for

students to engage in self-assessment and set personal learning goals based

on feedback.

**Some Thoughts on the Value of Conversational Evidence**

“We listen to learners during class meetings, at individual or group conferences, or when we read students’ self-assessments about their work. We also have opportunities to listen when students assess their work in relation to criteria, analyze their work samples for their portfolios, or prepare to report to parents about their learning.

When we listen to students in these ways, we are inviting them to think about their learning. As they think and explain, we can gather evidence about what they know and understand. We can find out about what they did or created-such as, their best efforts, what was difficult or easy, what they might do differently next time, and what risks they take as learners…The ability to articulate their learning processes-as part of a reader’s response, a mathematics response or in some other way – has become an increasingly important aspect of classroom and external assessment.

Conversations about learning involve listening to what students have to say about their learning, or reading what they record about their learning. The “conversation” may be face-to-face or in writing.

-Dr. Anne Davies,

Making Classroom Assessment Work, 2nd Edition

**Accountable Talk**

If we are asking teachers to use and weigh conversational evidence along with other forms of evidence, then it is important that **students learn how to talk and listen to each other, how to think critically and reason effectively using appropriate evidence and standards**. Accountable Talk is one way to do this effectively in the classroom.

Accountable talk is talk by both teachers and students that responds to and further develops what others in the class have said. It puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion. Accountable talk uses evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., proofs in Mathematics, data from investigations in Science, textual references in literature) and follows established norms of good reasoning. Accountable talk sharpens students’ thinking by reinforcing their ability to use and create knowledge-Michaels and O’Connor, 2002 [www.instituteforlearning.org](http://www.instituteforlearning.org)

Accountable talk also refers to the ways that teachers skilfully encourage their students to think deeply, articulate their reasoning, and listen with purpose. Many believe talk is very useful for students as they learn; there is evidence of this world-wide. Accountable talk promotes academic rigor, is a characteristic of quality instruction and serves as a crucial mechanism for socializing intelligence.

**In Classrooms Where Students Use Accountable Talk, They…**

* Actively participate in classroom talk in a safe, inquiry-focused classroom
* Listen attentively and allow others to speak without interruption (i.e. turn and talk to a partner...)
* Elaborate and build on each other’s ideas referencing specific and accurate knowledge and questioning claims unsupported by sufficient evidence (paraphrase, reiterate, summarize…)
* Restate accurately and acknowledge the worthiness of the ideas and claims of others
* Work to clarify or expand a proposition or claim by citing appropriate evidence
* Speak directly and respectfully to other students on appropriate occasions
* Reference appropriate intellectual standards to ensure quality thinking for themselves and others (clarity, accuracy, precision, depth, breadth, significance, relevance, logic etc.)
* Adopt a ‘brainstorming’ stance towards the topic under investigation\* (Kerry Walters)
* Work together towards developing the habits of mind of a thoughtful and critical thinker
* Develop awareness of and work to avoid making mistakes and flaws in human reasoning

**Considerations and Challenges for Teachers:**

1. Establishing a safe, inquiry-based, non-judgemental classroom environment where everyone in the classroom is invited to participate and where student voice is featured regularly and respected.
2. Making what is said intelligible with special attention paid to new and complex content.
3. Managing coherence so that instruction maintains a logical flow among students with many perspectives-using norms and protocols to keep conversations rich, productive and on-track.
4. Maintaining student engagement and motivation; going beyond simply listening to inspire real interest and commitment to ideas; ensuring student engagement reflects authentic brainstorming.
5. Ensuring equitable participation so that all students are heard, not just the naturally vocal.
6. Using collaborative group structures and before, during and after literacy strategies effectively that release greater control and autonomy to students to talk, discuss and dialogue among themselves.

The idea that you have to repeat something and repeat it and repeat it, most people think that that’s insane and say ‘I don’t have time to do that’-if you don’t do that, your kids are not learning, you’re getting through the curriculum, but you don’t have any real evidence of learning, what happens in most classrooms is that once a kid gives the right answer, we move on-we don’t know why they gave the right answer, we don’t know if everyone else has the same thinking, or agrees with the answer or not, we heard what we wanted to hear so ‘move on’, that is what teaching is most of the time, my advice, slow down, slow down, and find out, who heard what.-**Dr. Lucy West**

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| **Unit:**  **Learning Goals:**  **Success Criteria:** | **Student** | **Conversation # 1**  **Date:**  **Notes/Feedback:** | **Conversation # 2**  **Date:**  **Notes/Feedback:** | **Conversation # 3**  **Date:**  **Notes/Feedback:** |
| **1.** |  |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |  |
| **3.** |  |  |  |
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| **1.** |  |  |  |
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| **Universal Intellectual Standards** by Linda Elder and Richard Paul  **Universal intellectual standards are standards which must be applied to thinking whenever one is interested in checking the quality of reasoning about a problem, issue, or situation.** To think critically entails having command of these standards. To help students learn them, teachers should pose questions which probe student thinking; questions which hold students accountable for their thinking; questions which, through consistent use by the teacher in the classroom, become internalized by students as questions they need to ask themselves. The ultimate goal, then, is for these questions to become infused in the thinking of students, forming part of their inner voice, which then guides them to better and better reasoning. While there are many universal standards, the following are some of the most essential:  **CLARITY:** *Could you elaborate further on that point? Could you express that point in another way? Could you give me an illustration? Could you give me an example?* Clarity is the gateway standard. If a statement is unclear, we cannot determine whether it is accurate or relevant. In fact, we cannot tell anything about it because we don't yet know what it is saying. For example, the question, "What can be done about the education system in America?" is unclear. In order to address the question adequately, we would need to have a clearer understanding of what the person asking the question is considering the "problem" to be. A clearer question might be "What can educators do to ensure that students learn the skills and abilities which help them function successfully on the job and in their daily decision-making?"      **ACCURACY:** *Is that really true? How could we check that? How could we find out if that is true?* A statement can be clear but not accurate, as in "Most dogs are over 300 pounds in weight."  **PRECISION:** *Could you give more details? Could you be more specific?* A statement can be both clear and accurate, but not precise, as in "Jack is overweight." (We don’t know how overweight Jack is, one pound or 500 pounds.)  **RELEVANCE:** *How is that connected to the question? How does that bear on the issue?* A statement can be clear, accurate, and precise, but not relevant to the question at issue. For example, students often think that the amount of effort they put into a course should be used in raising their grade in a course. Often, however, the "effort" does not measure the quality of student learning; and when this is so, effort is irrelevant to their appropriate grade.  **DEPTH:** *How does your answer address the complexities in the question? How are you taking into account the problems in the question? Is that dealing with the most significant factors?* A statement can be clear, accurate, precise, and relevant, but superficial (that is, lack depth). For example, the statement, "Just say No!" which is often used to discourage children and teens from using drugs, is clear, accurate, precise, and relevant. Nevertheless, it lacks depth because it treats an extremely complex issue, the pervasive problem of drug use among young people, superficially. It fails to deal with the complexities of the issue.  **BREADTH:** *Do we need to consider another point of view? Is there another way to look at this question? What would this look like from a conservative standpoint? What would this look like from the point of view of . . .?* A line of reasoning may be clear accurate, precise, relevant, and deep, but lack breadth (as in an argument from either the conservative or liberal standpoint which gets deeply into an issue, but only recognizes the insights of one side of the question.)  **LOGIC:** *Does this really make sense? Does that follow from what you said? How does that follow? But before you implied this, and now you are saying that; how can both be true?* When we think, we bring a variety of thoughts together into some order. When the combination of thoughts are mutually supporting and make sense in combination, the thinking is "logical." When the combination is not mutually supporting, is contradictory in some sense or does not "make sense," the combination is not logical.  **Question: How Might These Standards Inform Classroom Assessment and Be Use Effectively to Promote Richer Conversation and Discourse?**   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | * **Intell** to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice and limitations of one's viewpoint. Intellectual humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, Having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice and limitations of one's viewpoint. Intellectual humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.      * **Intellectual Courage**: Having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs or viewpoints toward which we have strong negative emotions and to which we have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading. To determine for ourselves which is which, we must not passively and uncritically "accept" what we have "learned." Intellectual courage comes into play here, because inevitably we will come to see some truth in some ideas considered dangerous and absurd, and distortion or falsity in some ideas strongly held in our social group. We need courage to be true to our own thinking in such circumstances. The penalties for non-conformity can be severe.      * **Intellectual Empathy**: Having a consciousness of the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them, which requires the consciousness of our egocentric tendency to identify truth with our immediate perceptions of long-standing thought or belief. This trait correlates with the ability to reconstruct accurately the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than our own. This trait also correlates with the willingness to remember occasions when we were wrong in the past despite an intense conviction that we were right, and with the ability to imagine our being similarly deceived in a case-at-hand.      * **Intellectual Integrity**: Recognition of the need to be true to one's own thinking; to be consistent in the intellectual standards one applies; to hold one's self to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists; to practice what one advocates for others; and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought and action.      * **Intellectual Perseverance**: Having a consciousness of the need to use intellectual insights and truths in spite of difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; firm adherence to rational principles despite the irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time to achieve deeper understanding or insight.      * **Faith In Reason**: Confidence that, in the long run, one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be best served by giving the freest play to reason, by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions by developing their own rational faculties; faith that, with proper encouragement and cultivation, people can learn to think for themselves, to form rational viewpoints, draw reasonable conclusions, think coherently and logically, persuade each other by reason and become reasonable persons, despite the deep-seated obstacles in the native character of the human mind and in society as we know it.      * **Fairmindedness**: Having a consciousness of the need to treat all viewpoints alike, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community or nation; implies adherence to intellectual standards without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group. | |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | | | Valuable Intellectual Virtues (June 1996). 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Foundation For Critical Thinking, Online at website: [www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org/)) |  | |   **RNSS**:  *Do I have a vested interest in this issue?  Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?*  Human think is often biased in the direction of the thinker - in what are the perceived interests of the thinker.  Humans do not naturally consider the rights and needs of others on the same plane with their own rights and needs.  We therefore must actively work to make sure we are applying the intellectual standard of fairness to our thinking.  Since we naturally see ourselves as fair even when we are unfair, this can be very difficult.  A commitment to fai |

**Keeping Classroom Discussions Authentic**

**‘Brainstormers’**

* Eager to discuss issues and explore them through dialogue; committed to unravelling problems using intellectual standards
* Develops a personal attachment to the subject matter under discussion
* Has a rich definition of practical value
* Even when the discussion does not yield certain answers-still considers the discussion to be worthwhile
* Willing to be wrong or embarrassed as part of the dialogue process
* Is not interested in impressing others; truly seeks understanding and personal growth
* Because they take issues more personally, can sometimes be dogmatic
* Enjoys the interplay of ideas contributed by others in class
* Not afraid to take risks with his/her ideas
* Thinking takes place on both an intellectual and an emotional level
* Passionate about the topic under discussion
* Shows innovation and strives to come up with new concepts or ways of looking at something
* Classroom discussions make a real sometimes profound impact on the life of the learner

**‘Bull\*\*itters’**

* Only goal in conversation is personal amusement and convincing others his/her view is supreme or correct
* Strong oral skills-can manipulate classroom opinion with rhetorical skills
* Detached-no commitment or relationship to the topic of conversation
* Tries to convince others his/her views are genuine, but really holds entire conversation in contempt (nihilistic attitude)
* Uses irrelevant information in discussion
* Often likes to be the centre of attention
* Loses sight of others in the room, except as an audience for his/her views
* Can be arrogant – does not need to deepen his/her understanding of a topic
* Discusses with confidence, topics he/she is generally ignorant about
* Believes that no truth can result from classroom conversation or discussion

**-Adapted from Kerry Walters**

**On Bull\*\*itting and Brainstorming**

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| Literacy Strategies That Elicit Conversational Evidence and Promote Student Discourse   * Teacher Read-Aloud * Shared and Guided Reading Groups * Literature Circles * Instructional Conversations * Idea Circles * Inquiry Circles * Reciprocal Teaching * Question the Author * Math or Literature Congress * Classical Debates * Tri-bates * U-Shaped Discussion * Four Corners * Fishbowl Debates * Think-Pair-Share * Turn and Talk * Take Five * Timed Retell * Debates * Group Roles * Role-Play Debates * Determining Key Ideas * Briefing the Prime Minister * Discussion Web * Envoy * Discussion Etiquette * Jigsaw * Three Step Interview * Quartet Interviews * Rotating Groups or Papers * Small-Group Work * Structured Overview * S.W.O.T. Analysis * Place Mat * Say Something * Think-Aloud * Value Line * Consensus Workshop * Affinity Diagram * Give One-Get One * Other |

**What is the Focused Conversation Method?**

The Focused Conversation method is a research-informed method of carefully planning, designing and facilitating thoughtful conversations and questions to probe four different levels of thinking (**Observational, Reflective, Interpretive** and **Decisional** levels) in order to come to a new understanding or a decision about a particular topic or issue. To paraphrase author and facilitator Jo Nelson, it is a method of clear thinking about that promotes and elicits clear thinking**. When students respond at a level of thinking that is inappropriate during the conversation, teachers can redirect them to focus on the current desired level of thinking.** The method can be used to gather evidence of student learning in many different possible ways:

* **To review or consolidate a unit, lesson**
* **To confront and discuss a difficult topic**
* **To debrief a classroom discussion, debate, learning event, simulation**
* **To clarify learning goals and success criteria**
* **To clarify personal learning goals**

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| **Analysis** | **Observational Level in a Nutshell** | **Reflective Level in a Nutshell** | **Interpretive Level in a Nutshell** | **Decisional Level in a Nutshell** |
| **Focus of the Questions** | Data, the facts about the topic, external reality | Internal relationship to the data | The life meaning of the topic | Resolution, implications, application, new directions |
| **Benefit to the Group** | Ensures that everyone deals with the same body of data and all the aspects | Reveals individuals’ initial responses and validates their experience | Draws out the significance from the data for the group; focuses on learnings | Makes the conversation relevant for the future. |
| **Questions Are In Relation To** | The senses: what is seen, heard and touched, etc. | Associations, memories, feelings, moods or emotional tones | Layers of meaning, purpose, significance, implications, ‘story’, values, patterns. Considering alternatives, options. Comprehension. | Consensus, implementation, action, summarizing, application of knowledge, future directions. |
| **Key Questions** | What objects do you see?  What words and phrases stand out?  What happened? | What does it remind you of? Which part surprised you? What delighted you? Where did you struggle? | Why is this happening?  What is this all about?  How does this compare?  What does it all mean for us? How will this affect our work? What are we learning from this?  What is the larger pattern emerging? What is the insight? | How might you use this? How would you summarize your learning? What decision is called for? What are your next steps? |
| **Traps and Pitfalls** | Asking closed questions, or questions not specific enough, no clear focus; ignoring objective questions because “they are too trivial” | Limiting the discussion to an either/or survey of likes and dislikes; Asking vague or broad questions that don’t evoke relevant personal associations; Asking questions that demand embarrassingly personal answers. | Inserting pre-cooked meaning that prevents real insight; over-intellectualizing or over-abstracting; judging responses as right or wrong. | Forcing a decision when group is not ready or avoiding pushing group for decision. |
| **If this level is omitted** | There will be no shared observation of what the group is discussing; the various comments may seem dis-related | The world of intuition, memory, emotion, and imagination are ignored, and no shared personal experience is articulated on which to build meaning. | Group gets no chance to make sense out of the first two levels. No higher-order thinking goes into decision-making. | Learning is not consolidated, and the responses from the first three levels are not applied or tested in real life. |

**Conversational Evidence Resulting from Teacher Questioning**

Through questioning, teachers gather evidence about their students’ current level of knowledge and skills, as well as their attitudes, interests and learning preferences. Strategically planned questions guide students’ thinking on a topic, and focus their efforts to achieve learning goals. The evidence of learning gathered from questioning can provide teachers with information they need to differentiate instruction, Further questioning makes students’ thinking visible so teachers can detect confusions and misconceptions. Questioning is a developed skill which, when effectively implemented, can enrich the classroom environment and improve the learning of your students. Good questioning is best used with a combination of other teaching strategies.

**Considerations:**

* **Create and Nurture A safe emotional climate** (creating a risk-free environment where students’ responses will be valued, accepted, listened to respectfully by peers and by the teacher)
* **Norms** (use co-constructed classroom norms for lessons where questioning/discussion will be the primary focus
* **Learning Goals** (questions designed to help students meet established learning goals and identify students’ misunderstandings)
* **Variety** (use various frameworks or taxonomies of questions, a good balance between open (wide range of acceptable responses) and closed (limited number of acceptable responses)
* **Covert** (questions designed to get students to reflect, think, visualize and see privately, individually)
* **Overt**  (questions designed to get students to think along with others or express thinking publicly)
* **Think Time** (waiting three or more seconds before eliciting a student response and before speaking after a student’s response)
* **Turn and Talk** (allow students time to listen to and talk to each other before responding in front of the whole class, especially for questions with high thinking demands-use accountable talk strategies)
* **Accountability and Level of Concern** (accountability captures the degree to which students will share their thinking with others [involvement] and how public will this sharing be [partners, small group, whole class], it also conveys the level of anxiety [little to high] that students experience, depending upon the approach the teacher uses to elicit student responses. Here are some examples:
* The teacher asks students to think to themselves first and then tells them she will select two or three students to respond (high level of accountability and concern)
* The teacher asks students to think to themselves first and then share with a partner before sharing their thinking with the class. (high level accountability, low level of concern)
* The teacher asks students if anyone could answer the question. The teacher waits for someone to respond. (low level of accountability, low level of concern)
* The teacher randomly selects several students to respond to questions-that response is made in front of the class (low level of accountability, high level of concern)
* **Probing** (build on students’ initial responses, seek more information, clarify thinking, extend answers, get students to think more deeply
* **Planning** (strategically plan a variety of questions and entry points to elicit information about what students are thinking)
* **Student-Friendly Language** (frame questions in language that is age and grade-appropriate)
* Universal Intellectual Standards, Elements of Thought, Valuable Intellectual Traits to help students learn to develop ‘better’ answers, avoid giving ‘worse’ answers, and nurturing critical intelligence/mindset
* **Coherence** (provide appropriate questions at the beginning, during, and at the end of a class)
* **Engagement** (frame questions in ways designed to help engage the students in classroom learning)
* **Relevance** (questions allow students to reveal significant understanding of curriculum expectations)
* **Responding to Students Responses**

-No Response -Incorrect Response

-Partially Correct Response -Correct Response

-Silly Response

-Guess

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| **Questions for Quality Thinking**  **Knowing**—Identification and recall of information  Who, what, when, where, how\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  Describe\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  **Understanding**—Organization and selection of facts and ideas  Retell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_in your own words.  What is the main idea of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  **Applying**—Use of facts, rules, principle  How is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and example of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  How is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_related to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  Why is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_significant?  **Analyzing**—Separation of a whole into component parts  What are the parts or features of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  Classify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_according to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  Outline/Diagram/web \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  How does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_compare/contrast with\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What evidence can you list for\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  **Creating**—Combination of ideas to form a new whole  What would you predict or infer from\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What ideas can you add to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  How would you create/design a new\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What might happen if you combined \_\_\_\_\_\_\_with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What solutions would you suggest for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  **Evaluating**—Development of opinions, judgments, or decisions  Do you agree\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What do you think about\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What is the most important\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  Prioritize\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  How would you decide about\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  What criteria would you use to assess\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?  **Q-Charts** are used to help students to develop questions at different levels of thinking (literal, inferential, synthesis and evaluative) to support their comprehension. Students can also use these questions to make connections.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Q CHART | IS / ARE | DID / DO | CAN | WOULD | WILL | MIGHT | | **WHO** |  |  |  |  |  |  | | **WHAT** |  |  |  |  |  |  | | **WHERE** |  |  |  |  |  |  | | **WHY** |  |  |  |  |  |  | | **WHEN** |  |  |  |  |  |  | | **HOW** |  |  |  |  |  |  | | **Three types of questions**  (Critical Thinking Consortium – TC2)   * **Factual Questions**   -one correct answer   * **Personal Preference**   -personal opinion   * **Reasoned Judgement**   -make a judgement between alternatives based on clear criteria  **Designing Powerful Questions-TC2**   * Require use of reasoned judgement (students make an informed choice between alternatives based on criteria-not just a retrieval of information or mimic a procedure, or rationalize a personal preference) * Address significant grade/course curriculum expectations * Phrased and framed in student-friendly language for age and grade * Be perceived as meaningful, worthy and challenging by students * Answerable/doable given available tools, time and materials * Limit the amount of necessary background knowledge needed by students to provide a thoughtful and well informed response   **Three Levels Guide of Questions**  (*Stepping Out, Teacher’s Resource*)  **On the Page**  -Literal  **Between the Lines**  -Inferential  **Off the Page**  -Evaluative |

**Tips for Conducting and Capturing Student Conversations**

* Identify the purpose, audience and context for the conversation; clarify specific ground rules
* Explore or con-create norms for classroom conversations together and post them in the classroom
* Have opportunities for ‘practice conversations’, offer students descriptive feedback and encourage reflection and self-assessment using intellectual standards and elements of reasoning
* Use concepts and skills from Instructional Intelligence to increase student safety, involvement, engagement and accountability (teacher responses, wait time, student groupings etc.,)
* Use technologies and new computer programs to record sample conversations as teaching tools for understanding rich conversations
* Connect the conversation directly to an established learning goal and related success criteria
* Identify a few look-fors –ask yourself if they reveal the evidence of learning you seek? Be specific.
* Don’t track the whole class, maybe track 1/3 or ½ of the class at a time-keep it manageable
* Record the tracking dates and any relevant jot notes about students meeting desired ‘look-fors’
* Involve students in peer and self-assessment of purposeful conversations they have with each other
* Use board media release forms to get informed parent consent to record student conversations
* Be able to describe, in a holistic way, different levels of performance for student conversations (when used for assessment of learning) make sure the levels can coach students to eventual success
* Attend to the language learning needs of ELLs when planning, guiding and assessing conversations
* Use conversational and other oral strategies to assess the relative success of classroom conversations (i.e. focused conversation method)
* Provide students with appropriate sentence starters and prompts to scaffold them into understanding the different ‘moves’ within a conversation-be explicit about the purpose of each of the ‘moves’
* Support students in developing a brainstorming stance towards all topics of classroom conversation
* If possible, use portable and other technologies (tablets, clickers, blogs, wikis) to keep the conversations going, when appropriate

**Additional Resources:**

* Growing Success 2010: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, Covering Grades 1-12
* *Making Classroom Assessment Work, 2nd Edition*, Anne Davies, Connections Group, 2007
* <http://www.qualres.org/HomeTria-3692.html>
* [www.instituteforlearning.org](http://www.instituteforlearning.org)
* resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/snapshots/**lucy**.html[Cached](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ZkgGrF9rBG8J:resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/snapshots/lucy.html+dr+lucy+west&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ca)
* You +1'd this publicly. [Undo](http://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=toolbar-instant&hl=en&ion=1&qscrl=1&nord=1&rlz=1T4SKPT_enCA427CA427)
* The Art of Focused Conversations for Schools, Jo Nelson, ICA Canada, 2001
* Think Literacy, Ontario Ministry of Education 2004
* Stepping Out: Teacher’s Resource, Pearson Canada
* ‘On Bullshitting and Brainstorming’, Kerry Walters, 1988
* Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration, Barrie Bennett and Carol Rolheiser, 2001
* Grand Conversations in the Primary Classroom, CBS -Capacity Building Series, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Special Edition # 18
* Grand Conversations in the Junior Classroom, CBS-Capacity Building Series, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Special Edition # 23
* www.ascd.org/publications/.../Procedures\_for\_Classroom\_**Talk**.aspx[Cached](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:U59iELanfMoJ:www.ascd.org/publications/books/108035/chapters/Procedures_for_Classroom_Talk.aspx+accountable+talk&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ca) - [Similar](http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&safe=active&qscrl=1&nord=1&rlz=1T4SKPT_enCA427CA427&biw=1093&bih=447&site=webhp&q=related:www.ascd.org/publications/books/108035/chapters/Procedures_for_Classroom_Talk.aspx+accountable+talk&tbo=1&sa=X&ei=b94pT7ngI6TC0AGguNzFCg&sqi=2&ved=0CDUQHzAC)
* Robust Conversations at Every Level, Power Point Presentation, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Coaching Institute, 2007
* Lucy West: Insights Into Effective Practice <http://resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/snapshots/lucy.html#culture>
* Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package – Facilitator’s Guide – Assessment for Learning, Ontario Ministry of Education
* www.macalester.edu/.../bookmark\_on\_**questioning**\_and\_**thinking**\_str...[Similar](http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&safe=active&rlz=1T4SKPT_enCA427CA427&q=related:www.macalester.edu/geography/mage/teachers/geofest/2007/handouts/Crapton/bookmark_on_questioning_and_thinking_strategies.pdf+questioning+for+quality+thinking&tbo=1&sa=X&ei=ZZM6T5viI8TG0AHgzaSfCw&ved=0CDgQHzAC)

1. Based on your experiences in crafting, facilitating and assessing student conversations, what other recommendations might you make about appropriate use of conversational evidence?
2. What role might conversational evidence play in the planning, assessment and evaluation framed within a collaborative inquiry? How might observation support teachers in becoming more adaptive, responsive and precise to meet students’ needs?
3. Lucy West’s hypothesis: the quality of classroom conversation among students is directly informed by the quality of conversation/discourse of adult teachers in a school. If she is right, what might be some ways to enrich the conversation/discourse among teachers?

**Something to Think About…**